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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE: SCENESETTER FOR FBI DIRECTOR MUELLER,S
VISIT

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11. (C) SUMMARY: Embassy Paris welcomes the visit of FBI Director Mueller. The timing of this first trip is ideal, with our bilateral relationship at its highest point in fifty years. You will find your interlocutors energized by the President,s visits to Paris and Normandy and they look forward to getting a sense of your strategy for the next year, and will want to know how they and other like-minded European states can contribute to the success of your efforts. END SUMMARY.

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

12. (SBU) The Ministry of Interior directs a civilian force of 146,000 national police who operate with a force of 99,509 national gendarmes to maintain internal security. Sarkozy merged the two primary internal intelligence agencies, Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST) and Renseignements Gnraux (RG), in May 2008 to form a French equivalent to the FBI. The goals of the merger include removing interagency competition detrimental to France,s counter-terrorism efforts, increasing operational capability, and phasing out redundancies. Foreign intelligence agencies now have a single internal intelligence interlocutor in France, that should increase and simplify cooperation. The organization is led by Bernard Squarcini, former deputy director of the RG, and close friend of President Sarkozy. A working group at the directorate general of the national police has been meeting regularly to work out the new structure of the merged intelligence service, including its jurisdiction, size, and missions. The media reports that the RG will no longer monitor public opinion, union activities, and social conflicts, but details of on-the-ground changes in responsibilities remain unknown. Frdric Pchenard, director-general of the French national police is overseeing the merger.

COUNTER-TERRORISM

13. (SBU) France is one of a number of major European countries combating terrorism at home and abroad, although it has not suffered a significant terrorist incident in recent years. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) poses a considerable threat to French interests, underscored by statements made by al-Qaida senior leadership or AQIM itself. Local Corsican separatists, Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) members and ultra-left anarchist factions have been responsible for the majority of recent attacks and arrests of individuals suspected of involvement in terrorist activities or membership of groups deemed terrorist. The number and violence of ETA and Corsican attacks in France have continued to drop, but France is at once a target as well as a potential staging area for international Islamic terrorist groups, including Kurdistan Workers party affiliates. France remains on high alert and recognizes its continuing status as a target of AQIM and of other extremist groups in France and abroad.

¶4. (SBU) Loic Garnier was appointed in June to succeed Christophe Chaboud as the head of the Ministry of Interior, s Unite de Coordination de la Lutte Anti-Terroriste (UCLAT). Superintendant Garnier was formerly chief of the criminal brigade, the elite unit of the judicial police in Paris.

RADICALISM

¶5. (SBU) In addition to undertaking operations to arrest and prosecute terrorists, France continued programs to address radicalization and extremism through the use of social and economic incentives to reduce the susceptibility of at risk populations.

DOMESTIC POLITICS

¶6. (C) Now approaching the midpoint of his five year term, President Sarkozy is comfortably riding the momentum generated by a successful showing in last June's European Parliament elections that weakened the UMP's primary opponent, the Socialist Party. With the opposition in disarray, Sarkozy hopes to extend his political power base by scoring big in upcoming regional council elections in March ¶2010. Regional elections will be an important snapshot of his presidency at mid-term, and the relative strength of French political parties before the presidential and legislative elections in 2012. In recent months, Sarkozy and his majority UMP party have concentrated on joining forces with a number of small political parties from across the political spectrum to ensure his reelection. Sarkozy has sought to lead on security and immigration issues, an issue that brought him considerable notoriety during his tenure as Minister of Interior under President Chirac.

Anti-immigration sentiment has been a rallying cry for the extremist National Front.

MILITARY ISSUES

¶7. (SBU) In conjunction with specific gendarmes units used for military operations, the army is responsible for external security under the Ministry of Defense. France currently has over 3,000 troops actively participating in operations in Afghanistan and Operation Enduring Freedom. The current French commitment includes ground troops and air assets. There is growing media discussion in France about the McChrystal report, which advocates additional troops for Afghanistan, and the Obama administration, s review of policy. However, Sarkozy used an October 15/16 interview with Le Figaro (focused on domestic issues and designed to shore up his base), to state that France would send ~ one additional soldier8 to Afghanistan, although there may be room for increased civilian engagement, especially if the Afghan government is able to restore legitimacy in the wake of the troubled August 20 elections. Unlike several other significant European troop contributors through ISAF, the French do not have overly restrictive rules of engagement and have been a strong ally in the field. (Note: the ¶European8 gendarme force Sarkozy proposed last spring will finally begin to arrive in Afghanistan in December.)

DATASHARE

¶8. (U) We do not have an agreement with France for Preventing and Combating Serious Crime (PCSC). The French have generally pointed to their privacy laws as an impediment. The U.S. side has countered that our privacy laws are similar and not a bar to enhanced datashare. The draft text of an Agreement was shared with the French Ministry of Interior in July 2009. U.S. Embassy Paris also transmitted a Diplomatic Note to the French Foreign Ministry in August 2009 requesting that in-depth discussions on both a PCSC Agreement and an HSPD-6 agreement concerning terrorist watchlist data begin as soon as possible. Despite the difficulties of getting negotiations underway, U.S. law enforcement officials describe cooperation with their French Government counterparts as very good within the context of French privacy restrictions.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

¶9. (SBU) The constitution and law prohibit trafficking in persons for all purposes. However, trafficking in women and children for commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, and petty crime is a problem. Prostitution is legal. However, the law prohibits procuring, aiding, assisting, maintaining, publicly soliciting, or profiting from the prostitution of another individual. Enforcement of these laws varied, and criminal activity related to prostitution remained a problem. The country was a destination for victims, primarily trafficked from Africa (notably Cameroon and Nigeria), Central and Eastern Europe (notably Bulgaria and Romania), the former Soviet Union, and increasingly Asia (notably China), for prostitution and domestic servitude. A majority of the estimated 18,000 women in the country's commercial sex trade were likely victims of trafficking. Traffickers operated principally in small criminal networks characterized as μ -trafficking networks⁸ that included both citizens and foreigners. They used various methods to recruit and retain victims including force, fraud, identification document confiscation, cultural isolation, and physical and psychological abuse. Several law enforcement agencies were involved in combating trafficking. The government cooperated bilaterally and with international institutions such as the European Police Agency (Europol) to investigate, track, and dismantle trafficking networks, initiating more than 500 court cases for soliciting and dismantling over 23 pimping networks in 2008. Authorities worked with officials in other countries, particularly source countries, to counter trafficking and identified 822 victims during the year.

COUNTRY CONDITIONS

¶10. (U) France is a first-world western democracy with a varied economy and one of the most diverse populations in Western Europe. At least 20% of the French population of approximately 65 million people has either a parent or a grandparent who is or was not originally French. Most European migrants who arrived before about 1970 have integrated fairly effectively into French life; however, more recent migrants and their families, many from the former French colonies, have not been able to find a place in French society as readily. Although there are no official statistics, fully ten percent of France's population is Muslim, which have helped inform the country's developed and

nuanced views from the Middle East Peace Process to assimilation of minority populations. France continues to be an asylum destination for immigrants attracted by France's relatively generous social security, welfare and education systems. Many migrants remain in France "without papers" to work illegally (estimates range from 300,000 to 400,000 clandestine residents in 2008). The Government of France has responded with a combination of integration and enforcement measures.

¶11. (U) The worldwide economic crisis has increased the unemployment rate to 7.8 percent in the fourth quarter of ¶2008. High unemployment among the young (especially undereducated young men of foreign origin), public tensions among those of different social and ethnic groups, and inadequate low-income housing all contribute to political, social, and economic criticism of the Sarkozy administration.

Good luck with your travels in the region. We look forward to welcoming you again to Paris.

Best regards,

RIVKIN